thickening difficulties, to take one or other of two courses—either to cease from the inquiry altogether, and to flatter himself with the thought, that he is often or commonly a virtuous agent: or to abandon himself to doubt, distraction, and terror, and as he feels the painfulness of these feelings, to betake himself to superstition, and every kind of bodily exercise that may be fitted to deaden or delude the moral sense. One or other of the results now indicated has commonly been the issue—an uninquiring self-satisfaction, or an uneasy self-suspicion, which drives the individual to the readiest refuge that may present itself, and in which he may, by certain acts supposed to be pleasing to God, allay the reproaches by which he is troubled. Such is the issue in which conscience lands us—it drives us to thoughtlessness, or it goads us to madness. We see it strikingly exhibited in the case of those whose crimes are peculiarly aggravated—as in that of the guilty spendthrift, who has brought multitudes to ruin—or in that of the murderer, with the pangs of his dying victims ever rising up freshly before his mind: such persons either contrive to give themselves up to utter unconcern, or, in restless and feverish discontent, they pursue every superstitious ceremony which may hold out the hope of appeasing an offended God.

But we suppose that there is an individual sufficiently earnest to resist all the allurements which would turn him aside, and sufficiently enlightened to discover the inefficacy of superstitious observances: to what result would he be conducted? He would settle down, we apprehend, in a most painful uncertainty, quite conscious that sin had been committed, and yet ignorant of any means by which sin can be forgiven, and scarcely knowing whether he has ever so much as done one virtuous act.

It seems to be difficult or impossible, then, by a simple direct

inspection of the state of mind at any given time, to determine whether it is truly virtuous. But let us inquire whether there may not be certain general principles which guide us out of our uncertainty, and land us in clear and distinct, though it may be very humbling, views of ourselves.

And, first, it is a general principle that, in judging of a responsible agent at any given time, we ought to take into view the whole state of his mind. We ought not to single out a particular part, or view it under an exclusive aspect. It is here, as